DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 240 RC 018 319

AUTHOR Insko, Lee
TITLE Why Should and How Can Universities Become Involved in Rural Communities?
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the National Conference on Rural Adult Education Initiatives (1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Continuing Education; Delivery Systems; Educational Legislation; Educational Needs; Higher Education; *Institutional Mission; Institutional Role; Models; *Nontraditional Education; *Public Colleges; Rural Areas; *Rural Education
IDENTIFIERS *Eastern Oregon State College

ABSTRACT

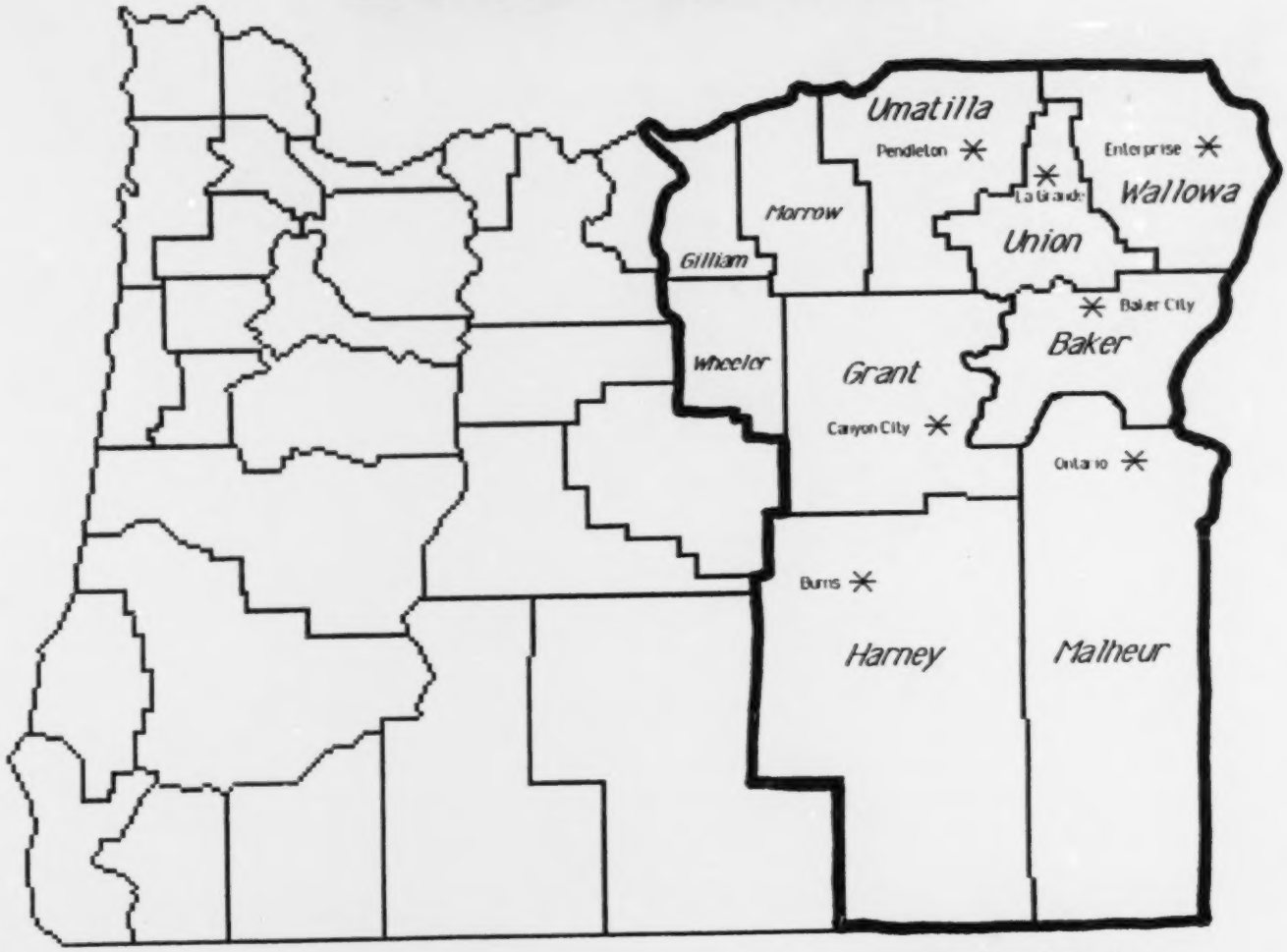
By legislative edict, Eastern Oregon State College serves Oregon's 10 eastern counties, an area of over 42,000 square miles with fewer than four people per square mile. This service area is typical of much of the western United States. The economies of such rural areas are becoming more diversified, but will be unable to realize their potential without the expertise and services available through a service-oriented university. In the face of declining numbers of traditional college students, colleges and universities must re-prioritize their resources to better serve nontraditional students. Universities must deliver comprehensive educational and public service expertise to rural areas in the way that agriculture has been served by the agricultural extension service. Higher education in rural areas suffers from several general problems: (1) legislative encouragement of inappropriate urban models; (2) insufficient rural leadership; (3) poor understanding of today's rural America by legislators; and (4) lack of vision and innovative solutions. To address these problems, Eastern Oregon State College has developed a service delivery model based on the mission of providing specific educational programs and services to meet identified needs of the region. Service delivery components include a redefined main campus, a division to serve off-campus educational needs, a unit to service public service needs, and seven regional centers with local advisory boards that identify local educational needs. (SV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

RC 018319

ED 362240

EASTERN



*Regional Centers

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lee Inskeep

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

WHY SHOULD AND HOW CAN UNIVERSITIES BECOME INVOLVED IN RURAL COMMUNITIES?

Dr. Lee Insko, Dean of Regional Programs
Eastern Oregon State College
1410 "L" Avenue
La Grande, Oregon 97850-2899
Phone: 503-962-3614 Work
503-437-6405 Home

The title suggests two basic questions. Why should institutions of higher education be involved in rural communities? How should these institutions be involved in rural America?

Prior to answering these two questions it is interesting to look at rural, isolated America. Initially, let's look at the Eastern Oregon State College service area. Eastern serves the 10 easternmost counties in the State by legislative edict. Eastern proposed that edict in 1978 as a strategy for survival because of declining traditional student populations and the constant threat of closure by an urban dominated legislature. This region consists of 42,000+ square miles with 163,000- inhabitants. For perspective that is an area slightly larger than the state of Ohio with fewer than 4 people per square mile. This area includes only two towns of over 10,000 people, 64 school districts with 145 separate school buildings and 29,908 students (K-12), 4 school districts with Hispanic populations that exceed 25% of the student body and high school graduation rates that exceed 90%. The basic economy, historically dependent upon timber and agriculture, is also an economy that is expanding rapidly to include value-added products associated with both wood products and agriculture, a large arts community with some of the United States leading art foundries and an expanding tourist industry. The question is, does this geographic description fit rural western America or is it an aberration? I would suggest that such a service area describes in general much of the western United States. Seven of the twenty states west of the Mississippi have 12 or fewer people per square mile. Six of the western states average over 50 people per square mile but in many of these, such as Texas, much of population resides in some large population centers which still leave large areas of remote, isolated, rural citizens who need the educational and public service components available in the colleges and universities within a region.

Now we need to look at the questions posed by the title. The answer to the first, "why should colleges be involved in rural America", taken from a simplistic point of view is because the services are badly needed by rural America. Rural communities need the total expertise available through the colleges and universities. The universities have the capacity to deliver the services, need the political support from rural legislators and will benefit from the "dose of reality"that the rural communities have to provide. Rural areas are changing and no longer can

prosper from university expertise furnished only through the agriculture extension services or "hit and miss" continuing education programs based on underfunded budgets or self-support revenue. The economy of rural areas is rapidly becoming much more diversified, with potential to become even more so, but will be unable to realize its potential without the expertise and services available through a service-oriented university.

A quick review of the changing nature of America and the world is important for an understanding of issues rural America must face. In 1900 85% of the population was employed in agriculture in the United States. In 1989 only 3% of the population was directly involved in agriculture and this small work force produced twice the food necessary to feed our population . In 1950 73% of all jobs in the United States were unskilled, now that percentage is 18% and it is predicted to decline to between 8%-12% by the year 2000. Almost all sectors of the economy are being effected by high technology and the numbers of employees are declining. But during the period of time between 1950 and 1988 the number of seats available for college students increased by 800%. Colleges and universities now have more capacity than students of a traditional nature. However, institutions of higher education have been slow and reluctant to move away from a traditional view of what a college and university should be. Presently high school graduation rates are approximately 75% and in 1990 the United States ranked 49th in the world in literacy. Couple these facts with the phenomena that only 15% of the present high school graduating classes are completing their college degrees by the time they are 25 years old and you realize that colleges possess tremendous capacity to provide services to non-traditional student populations, both urban and rural. It is my belief that many colleges and universities must re-prioritize resources. Are research and publication, rather than instruction and public service, given the needs of both urban and rural consumers in the present day economy the leading priorities of our colleges and universities? American colleges and universities are recognized as leaders worldwide in research and graduate education. Unfortunately recent efforts in these areas have lead to a high percentage of foreign students receiving the benefits of these institutions while the non-traditional student population in the United States has been underserved.

The conclusion to the first question is that universities need to delivery comprehensive educational and public service expertise in much the way agriculture was served by the agriculture extension service. To continue to maintain political support the university of the future will have to respond to the changing economies of rural as well as suburban America.

The second question is, "How should institutions of higher education be involved in rural America?" A variety of models exist and Eastern Oregon State College believes it has a viable model that is transferable to institutions, regardless of the service area.

* Employment Challenge to Education[2] → Oregon Business White Paper March 1991
William Daggett, Director of Occupational Ed
State of New York

After ten years of work in the trenches of delivering services to isolated, rural communities, I believe the following major general problems exist in non-urban areas which need to be addressed by colleges and universities.

1. **IMPROPER MODELS** - Legislatures and other uninformed bodies legislate or fiscally encourage urban models for the solution of problems in rural areas.

2. **INSUFFICIENT LEADERSHIP** - Rural leadership is extremely diluted because the same numbers of problems exist in rural communities as exist in urban communities but the numbers of people to fulfill leadership roles are limited.

3. **POOR UNDERSTANDING OF PRESENT DAY RURAL AMERICA** - Rural legislators are being driven by forces that are organized around agendas espoused by interest groups such as the National Cattlemens Association, etc. and lack the broad support necessary to deal effectively and intelligently with groups who don't understand rural America. (Environmental groups, etc.)

4. **LACK OF VISION** - The inability to look at totally different solutions to problems.

Given the opportunities that exist to provide services to rural America, Eastern Oregon State College has developed the following model to provide services.

The EASTERN model:

1. Develop a mission statement that has as a core the provision of services to a specific region.

2. Provide administrative leadership from the top down for the mission.

3. Develop a integrated system of delivery to provide services to a designated service area.

4. Develop specific programs to serve each of the identified needs within the region.

Specifically, EASTERN has done the following:

1. Written a regional mission statement

2. Developed a regional component for evaluation of all faculty and staff on the main campus.

3. Hires all new faculty and staff with the regional mission and its expectations as a criteria for continued employment.

4. Developed a three-pronged system for delivery of college/university services. These are:

   A REDEFINED MAIN CAMPUS

   A UNIT TO SERVE THE OFF-CAMPUS EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (Division of Continuing Education/Regional Programs)

   A UNIT TO SERVE THE PUBLIC SERVICE NEEDS (Regional Services Institute)

5. Established 7 regional centers with local advisory boards and locally employed staff.

6. Using advisory boards, locally employed staff and needs surveys attempted to determine the needs for specific areas. EASTERN RESPONDS TO IDENTIFIED NEEDS. EASTERN DOES NOT DEVELOP "CANNED PROGRAMS" THAT IT TAKES TO THE MASSES!

7. Develop PROGRAMS, not courses, to serve specific needs identified in the region.

The following is a quick review of a few of Eastern's successes over the past 10 years:

MAIN CAMPUS

1. Established a branch campus of Oregon State University that provides four agriculture degree programs with full time residence on the Eastern campus.

2. Established a branch campus of Oregon Health Science University that provides a BS(Nursing) program on the Eastern campus.

3. Established cooperative degree programs on the Eastern campus with the University of Oregon, Oregon State University, Western Oregon State College and Portland State University to provide degree or certificate programs on a one-time cohort basis.

DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

1. Serves an Average of 800 different regional students each quarter in degree or certificate programs.

2. Twenty-twenty five % of all Eastern graduates complete degree programs off campus. In 1991 the graduating class included 110 students who completed degrees off campus.

3. Has been responsible entirely or in part for over $3,000,000 in grants for programs to serve the region. (EXAMPLES- FIPSE, MEYER CHARITIBLE TRUST, U.S. DEPT OF EDUCATION, U.S. DEPT OF THE INTERIOR, CPB/ANNENBERG)

4. Will delivery three degree programs and two certificate programs via telecommunications beginning fall-'91. Thirty four courses are developed and have been field tested during the '90-91 school year.

REGIONAL SERVICES INSTITUTE

1. Regional impact studies for new State of Oregon Correctional facilities

2. Statewide HIV/AIDS Prevention Curriculum Assessment

3. Strategic planning and business plan development for regional businesses

4. Wrote grants for DEQ-mandated sewer systems for Wallowa Lake, Fossil, and Sumpter. (Over 15 million in grants secured for regional governmental agencies and businesses in the last 10 years.)

5. Developed a regional library system linking all hospitals and libraries through Eastern's main library to over 800 data base services through CD ROM and Simultaneous Remote Searching.

These are but a few examples which have had a great deal of impact upon the region, both educationally and economically. Because of this Eastern has had excellent funding and political support from both the State Board of Higher Education and the legislature. The main campus in LaGrande has realized tremendous gains as a result of this support in both campus facilities and faculty/staff salaries. The bottom line is that Eastern has a comprehensive program to serve the needs of the region with programs that are educationally sound, fiscally responsible and fill the specific needs of the rural area we serve. The entire institution has developed a "mind set" that enables Eastern to be a progressive regional college that is one the "cutting edge" of program development for service of an isolated, rural population.